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"HomeTerm Customizer"

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With all the formalities out of the way.....

RUNNING THE PROGRAM

(All instructions regarding DOS commands assume usage of DOS 2.0S, or its equivalent.)

Before you begin, you must make a backup copy of your original HomePak master disk. The manner in which you copy it is crucial - you must make your copy from DUP.SYS by using the "J" command. You cannot simply copy files from the HomePak master disk. The Customizer assumes absolute positioning of the files on the disk, and a "J" copy is the only way you can be assured of this.

Load the Customizer from the DUP.SYS menu, using the "L" command. (The Customizer was written in Action!, but you don't need the Action! cartridge to run it.) You will first be presented with a prompt to insert your backup copy of the HomePak master in disk drive 1. Insert the disk and press [RETURN].

THE MAIN MENU

The main menu has 8 selections. To make a change to a particular option, or to load one of the other two menus, press the number key in the left column. (i.e. To change option 2, press the [2] key.) Item 1 (Other R: handlers (ATR)) is primarily for ATR-8000 users running the RS-232 version of MYDOS. You can toggle between the "DEFAULT" setting (use HomePak's built in handler) and the "other.." setting (use a non-standard R: handler.) ATR-8000 users should choose "other..".

Item 2 (Key repeat rate) is for those users who have special hardware or special versions of Atari's O/S with a built in fast key repeat rate. The default setting is "FAST". Those with such special hardware, or who wish a slower cursor speed should choose "NORMAL".

Item 3 (Automatic Line Feed) allows you to set whether or not a Line Feed character (ASCII 10) is sent automatically after a Carriage Return (ASCII 13). Some modems (notably Rixon) and some services such as many RCP/M BBS's and Delphi, require that a line feed NOT be sent after a carriage return. If you are having difficulty with a BBS accepting your input after you press return, you should try to change this to "OFF". ("ON" is the default setting.) Turning this option to "OFF" won't affect most services, but some require it, so only change it if you are having problems with this.

Item 4 ('Stop' code(XOFF)) and item 5 ('Start' code(XON)) are for those people who use systems that don't use the usually standard XON/XOFF control codes. It is rare anymore to find a system that doesn't. It is probably a good idea not to change this unless you know exactly what is going on. In these items, and in the joystick keys menu, control characters are shown as their letter equivalent preceded with a "^" character. SHIFT-CTRL-keys are shown as "SHIFT^" except for SHIFT-CTRL-0 to -9 which are Macro keys in HomeTerm.

Item 6 (Character set menu) and item 7 (Joystick key menu) take you into the other two menus in the Customizer. They will be discussed later.

Item 8 (Bell on prompt) affects the "* Press any key *" prompt that frequently occurs in HomeTerm. You can turn the bell "ON" or "OFF". ("ON" is the default setting.) From the main menu, once you have finished making alterations to the various defaults, you can write your changes out to your backup of the HomePak master disk by pressing the [START] button. Or, you can exit the program without making any changes at all by pressing the [X] key. You will be prompted to insert your backup disk in disk drive 1 (if it isn't there already) and given one last chance to change your mind. In either case, press the [Y] key if you want to write/exit and any other key to abort.

CHARACTER SET MENU

HomeTerm uses two character sets, one being the master HomePak set and other being the standard Atari set. There are several public domain and commercial character set editors that allow you to create your own character sets, which you might want to substitute for the HomePak set.

Item 1 (Load new character set from disk) allows you load your own character set and make it the HomePak "master" set. (Note that this change (and items 2 and 3) affect ALL 3 PROGRAMS.) When asked, supply the disk filename of your character set and press [RETURN]. Because telecommunications requires a full ASCII set, the Customizer automatically alters ASCII 96 and ASCII 123 to 127 to their proper ASCII equivalents. (The copyright symbol at ASCII 16 is also kept, partly for esthetic and partly for legal reasons.)

Item 2 (Use default HomePak set) changes the character set back to the original set, and item 3 (Use standard ATARI set) changes it to the standard ATARI set. Your currently selected set is always shown in the menu, and is the one that will be written as the master set.

Items 4, 5, and 6 affect the behavior of character set changes when switching translation modes. Normally, the default is for the master character set to be used whenever in VIDTEX or ASCII mode, and the standard ATARI set when in ATARI mode. Item 4 changes HomeTerm to use the master set in all modes; select item 5 to use the standard ATARI set in all modes and item 6 to go back to the normal default.

Note that several ATARI set graphics characters are used in menus and prompts, and your display may look "funny" if your set doesn't contain them. It doesn't affect the program's operation in any way, but for cosmetic reasons you will probably want to retain the normal graphics set in your custom set if you want to use one, and only change numbers, letters, and punctuation.

JOYSTICK KEYS MENU

One feature that was not disclosed in the manual is the ability to use a joystick (plugged into port 1) to send keystrokes. Each direction on the joystick (forward, back, right and left) correspond to a keystroke, and the joystick button sends a fifth. Since HomeTerm Macros are sent via a single keystroke - you guessed it - you can send whole strings of commands using one joystick movement. The default settings are RETURN (button), CTRL-Q (forward), CTRL-S (back), Macro 5 (left) and CTRL-P (right). I use this configuration myself, with Macro 5 being set to: ^P^W:SK where ^P and ^W stand for CTRL-P and CTRL-W respectively. This

macro halts the current message being displayed, waits for a ':' (in the (UA RE D): prompt) and then sends SK[RETURN] which skips over all replies to the message - handy for skipping over messages you have no interest in. Using this default configuration, you can scan the entire message base without ever having to touch the keyboard (excepts perhaps to answer a message.)

Items 1 through 5 allow you to change the key associated with a particular direction or the button, and item 6 resets all stick keys to their HomeTerm defaults.

When asked to press a key that corresponds to a particular item, press the combination of keys that you'd normally type in its place - hold own CTRL and press a key for a control character and SHIFT-CTRL-0 to -9 for macros, as examples. See the 'Start' and 'Stop' codes item in the main menu docs above for an explanation of how the characters are displayed on the screen.

CREATING A STANDALONE HOMETERM DISK

In order to create a standalone, self-booting disk, you need to format a new disk, and copy over the following files from the HomePak master disk:

DOS.SYS
AUTORUN.SYS
HOMETERM.OBJ
(optionally, your HOMETERM.SET or other config files)

Rename HOMETERM.OBJ to HOMEMENU.OBJ and you're set - that's all there is to it. Note that you won't be able to exit back to the HomePak menu, because you've tricked the system into thinking that HomeTerm IS your menu.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The HomeTerm Customizer will only work with versions 3.3.3 of HomeTerm and any possible subsequent versions. Future releases of HomePak will have information encoded on the disk that will tell the Customizer where it needs to go on the disk to find the data it needs to change. A future release of the Customizer will also contain a patch function for bug fixes. It isn't included yet, as I felt it was necessary to release the Customizer in its present form for those users that require it to run HomeTerm on their systems.

[Russ Wetmore]